

Citizens' Utility Ratepayer Board

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HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE H.B. 2919

Testimony on Behalf of the Citizens' Utility Ratepayer Board
By David Springe, Consumer Counsel
February 25, 2008

Chairperson Schwartz and members of the committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony in support of H.B. 2919. HB 2919 authorizes a statutory framework for the Citizens' Utility Ratepayer Board (CURB) to follow when negotiating contracts for professional services. The agency currently follows the procedures set forth in HB 2919 and recommends the committee formalize these procedures through passage of this bill.

CURB is the statutory advocate for residential and small commercial customers in cases before the Kansas Corporation Commission, the Kansas courts and the legislature. The agency is a five member volunteer board appointed by the Governor, composed of one member from each congressional district and one at large appointment. The agency is staffed with three attorneys, one technical analyst and two support staff. The majority of the agency's work in cases is done through the hiring of outside technical experts (accountants, engineers, economists, cost of capital and rate design) who evaluate the utility proposals and serve as expert witnesses on behalf of the agency in trial. The agency is fee funded, paid for by the customers it represents in cases and is not funded through the state general fund.

The agency recommends the committee pass HB 2919 for the following reasons:

- The language in HB 2919 is drawn directly from an existing agency budget proviso. Therefore the agency already follows these procedures in negotiating contracts for professional services.
- This type of standardized practice is more appropriate for statutory treatment, as opposed to annual proviso treatment through the appropriations process.
- The language in HB 2919 mirrors language in K.S.A. 66-1513, which authorizes and sets forth procedures for negotiating contracts for professional services for the Kansas Corporation Commission. Since CURB is a small board, the Kansas Corporation Commission performs a number of administrative and IT services for the agency.

Thank you for the opportunity to support HB 2919.